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Have you ever had a golden time in your life, or a golden moment . . . or even a golden dream? A golden time in my life began when I started to meet a wonderful array of dreamers who have devoted their lives to discovering more about the potential of dreaming. This was 2003, when I began my doctoral research into lucid dreaming and creativity. Stephen LaBerge suggested I interview Harvard psychologist Deirdre Barrett for my PhD thesis, and I knew I’d struck gold when she told me about her book, *The Committee of Sleep*, which gathers together fascinating stories from artists, scientists, and creative writers throughout history who have been inspired by dreams. Twelve years on, her book is on my desk again as a valuable resource to dip into as I write my own books on lucid dreaming and healing dreams.

But Deirdre’s contribution to dream studies goes well beyond compiling inspiring dreams. She has documented the course of post-traumatic nightmares and the usefulness of ‘mastery dreams’ in controlling these; she is a noted hypnotherapist whose book *The Pregnant Man* gives readers an insider’s view of the dreamlike work of guiding trance states; and she has identified how hypnotisability can predict dream recall. She spent years editing IASD’s journal *Dreaming*, and her edited books involve valuable work on dreams, trauma, and hypnosis. She has even quantified how lucid dreams are often not so lucid. As Deirdre has said to me: ‘I’m interested in everything about dreams.’ One thing about her own dreams that interests her is the way that the colour gold appears in those which hold a special meaning for her. In this interview, Deirdre shares the way that her ‘golden’ dreams have shaped her life.

**CJ:** Could you share a life-changing dream?

**DB:** I am in a beautiful art nouveau lobby—much like that of the Chrysler Building in NYC. At first I am just wandering around in awe of all the arching gold details. Then I sense that it is time for me to leave to get to ‘The University.’ I glance around and locate an exit. Walking out this art deco door, I’m confronted with a busy street, much like NYC metropolis. I intend to hail a cab to get to The University but then I see a luminous golden brick path curving randomly across the sidewalk, meandering through the street and finally down a narrow alley and out of sight. I feel compelled to follow it.

A woman I’ve just met in waking life named Dee is standing outside and she says: ‘Follow the golden path.’

I ask, ‘but will it get me to The University?’ I know how to get there via the right-angled streets and taxis, but I’m wondering if I could follow the beckoning path and also end up there. I can’t discard either my goal of The University or the attraction of the golden path, so I’m frozen with indecision as I awaken.

It’s one of those dreams that are realer-than-real. The art deco lobby seems to this day like a specific place I’ve been. When I write now about the golden path, I still feel its tug intensely.

**CJ:** How did this dream change your life?

**DB:** I was applying for my first academic job at the time of the dream. At the time, in my waking life, I was very determined to ‘get to the university’ and didn’t immediately identify what the golden path was. I certainly interpreted it as saying not to emphasize academia as much. However, I disregarded the message and took the ‘best’ academic job I was offered, affording me little...
opportunity to work with dreams. I remained there only two years and then moved to the University of North Carolina where I could teach courses on both dreams and hypnosis, and got back to dream research.

My current job has proved better yet; I'm now doing mostly dream-related work with a bit of hypnosis—my other interest. There are great aspects to universities: my students, every bit as much as IASDers, are people I would meet along that golden path, but I think the right-angled streets and taxis represent aspects of the academic scenario which are too rigid.

At each stage of deciding to move and applying for other jobs, I had dreams with the same shade of luminous gold. In one, a mermaid passed a gilded object to me through the glass wall of an aquarium. At my Harvard job interview (awake, as I usually am at interviews), I glanced out a window and saw the Massachusetts statehouse's golden dome lit by the sun. When I was procrastinating on writing my first book, I dreamed of a woman handing me a modern illuminated manuscript with gilt gold outlining the other colors. I woke up and started writing.

CJ: Instant inspiration! It sounds like a story right out of your book.

DB: Yes, and I see how that sounds like a more straightforward ‘life-changing dream.’ However, I like the concept in Roger Knudson's articles in Dreaming, where he talks of ‘big’ dreams as ‘life shaping.’ He says of one subject, ‘The experience she reported is that the dream continued to be an active presence. The dream continued unbidden to come to mind.’ That's how I experienced my dream about the golden path.

CJ: That reminds me of something Wuthering Heights author Emily Brontë once said:

> I have dreamed in my life dreams that have stayed with me ever after and changed my ideas; they have gone through and through me, like wine through water, and altered the colour of my mind.

Dreams can be life-changing. Since you're a skilled hypnotherapist, I wonder if you think there are parallels between dreams and what we can experience in hypnotic trance?

DB: Hypnosis and dreams have much in common, as is reflected in our language about them. ‘Hypnosis’ is named for the god of sleep; phrases such as ‘dream-like’ are scattered throughout hypnotic inductions; and dream actions are sometimes described in words such as ‘trance.’ What they have in common is the coming together of the two major modes of cognition: 1) the emotional, visual, irrational and intuitive mode that Freud called ‘primary process,’ which is popularized as ‘right brain’ thinking; and 2) logical, verbal, linear reasoning which Freud called ‘secondary process,’ popularized as ‘left brain thinking.’

In lucid dreams and deep hypnosis, these two processes are most fully manifested and integrated with each other. Dreams and lighter hypnotic trances can be used similarly in psychotherapy, as both make end-runs around our usual defences and allow ‘thinking outside the box’—getting out of characteristic ruts and emotional patterns, but also professional situations where we feel stuck by conventional wisdom.

CJ: How does it feel to guide someone under hypnosis, working with their deep unconscious imagery?

DB: Sometimes it’s similar to dreamwork if one gives clients open-ended suggestions for projective techniques—telling them they’ll see a scene that will tell them something about a symptom or even that they’ll have a ‘dream’ in the trance state. Then you are trying to empathically sense their experience—to recreate images based on their description. However, at other times the hypnotherapist is designing and guiding specific imagery to induce an experience for the client—and you could think of that as taking over the dream-maker function in that state.

CJ: ‘Taking over the dream-maker function’—that’s a fascinating concept. If you could give people one reason to engage with and honour their dreams, what would it be?

DB: When we're stuck on a problem with our usual waking mode, dreams are likely to take another approach—more visual, intuitive, or more ‘outside the box.’

CJ: What is the most important recurring message of your dreams?

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Memories of Monte

of the dream world. He gave us a way to appreciate the messages from dream feelings and metaphors that promote personal growth and increase compassion. After all, how can you be angry with someone who shares a dream? That is Monte’s true gift to the world—and to himself.

Janet Wahl participated in Montague Ullman’s dream groups for over 15 years and took his leadership training seminars. After 35 years in education, she studied hypnotherapy and ThetaHealing. As a ThetaHealing® Master, she sees clients and teaches courses in dream work and the ThetaHealing® Technique.

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Blessed are the Dreamers

the greater question is why? At The Dream Boards we know the more we dream together the more visible the threads running through all our dreams are. The day Bob Van de Castle passed away, the energy of dreamers around the world and perhaps Bob’s own transition was so powerfully experienced it emerged for me in a dream that felt like grace, and exquisitely portrayed how absolutely connected we are.

So who really brought my Dream Boards group together for Thanksgiving or chose the Sermon on the Mount? How far back or forward in time does this circle? And why is it important for me, for all of us, to consider this now? These are questions still to explore. In a 2014 article in DreamTime magazine, excerpted from a 2006 IASD presentation, Bob Van de Castle said, “I am convinced that we need to consider dreams at a higher level, as manifestations of Subtle Energy, not just as vehicles for exposing personal dynamics.” I completely concur and have no doubt that whatever we conceive a higher level(s) to be, it bleeds through and it is always in play.

For that, I’m grateful—to Bob, to Savannah, Anna, Star and all the members of The Dream Boards, to IASD, the PDC and the GPG players, grateful to dreamers everywhere who dream the dreams, create the conversation, explore the layers and know that ultimately we are all dreaming together.

Blessed are the dreamers.

References


Maureen Boyd Biro is a certified Intuitive Practitioner, dream teacher and author, whose special interest is healing work and dream communication with memory-impaired individuals and their families. She has two forthcoming books: a memoir and a fictional book on dreaming for children.

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Amazing Dreamers

DB: For the professionally related ones at least, the idea that rather than the straight and narrow academic path, I should be following the golden path of dreams, imagery, and writing.

CJ: Thank you, Deirdre. Here’s to following the golden path of dreams!

Clare Johnson, PhD (Clare Jay): The first doctoral researcher to explore lucid dreaming as a creative writing tool, Clare has written two lucid dream-based novels, Breathing in Colour and Dreamrunner. Her new website explores all areas of lucid dreaming, from problem-solving and creativity to deep space lucidity and lucid dreaming in the dying process.

www.DeepLucidDreaming.com

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Dream Bibliophile

What the editors have done is identify twenty-two distinguished dream researchers, many of them what the cover blurb deliciously describes as “senior researchers”—in other words, people near the end of long and distinguished careers who have been studying dreams for decades—and asked them to write succinct summaries of their life’s work. Considering who the authors are, the result is a treasure trove of material reviewing a wide spectrum of dream research in which anyone with a serious interest in dreaming will find much to reflect upon.

That the book to a large extent also meets its stated goal of exploring the contributions of dream research to clinical practice is, for me, icing on the cake.
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